

A New Helsinki Needed? What Security Model for Europe? Papers from the December 2015 Germany-Poland-Russia Trialogue

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A New Helsinki Needed? What Security Model for Europe?

Papers from the December 2015 Germany-Poland-Russia Trialogue

Edited by Stefan Meister

Abstract The Germany-Poland-Russia Trialogue Workshop held at the DGAP in December 2015 focused on security. It brought together a group of Russian, Polish, and German experts to discuss their respective national security discourses and the security situation in Europe more generally. The three short papers included here provide brief analyses of how the security situation is currently perceived in each of the three countries. From the German side, the answer was the refugee crisis. Polish experts pointed to the threat posed by Russia, while the Russian speakers described their worries about color revolutions and regime change in the post-Soviet sphere. Certainly, perceptions of security threats differ greatly among EU member states, to say nothing of the difference between Russia and the EU as a whole. Only real understanding of our counterparts can help in forging a new *modus vivendi* and overcoming the dangerous situation in which Europe currently finds itself. The Germany-Poland-Russia Trialogues aim to forge better understanding of “the other side” through presentations and opportunities for discussion, offering crucial first steps toward overcoming misperceptions and stereotypes. The Trialogue meets regularly under the aegis of the DGAP (German Council on Foreign Relations), IMEMO (Primakov Institute of World Economy and International Relations Russian Academy of Sciences), and PISM (Polish Institute of International Affairs) and in cooperation with and financial support from SDPZ (Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation) and the Heinrich Böll Foundation’s Warsaw office.



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A New Helsinki Needed? What Security Model for Europe?

Papers from the December 2015 Germany-Poland-Russia Trialogue

Foreword

Russia's annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine have undermined the post-Cold-War security order in Europe. Its recent actions have called into question not only the sovereignty and borders of the Ukrainian state but also the very foundations of contemporary European security: the Paris Charter and the Budapest Memorandum. The main goal of this destabilizing policy is to renegotiate the principles of European security and to obtain guarantees from the West for Russian influence in the former Soviet states. Rather than strengthen the OSCE and its approach of collective security with equal rights and equal security for all participating states, Russian leaders are promoting a new style of bargaining among Great Powers. This harks back to Yalta, or even to the Vienna Congress of Metternich's day. Moscow has its sights set on a deal with Washington involving nothing less than security guarantees for Russia and the recognition of its exclusive sphere of influence.

With the Western sanctions, the economic, social, and political interdependence between Russia and the EU has become a threat to Russia's own security. The EU is using economic ties to put Russia under pressure to stop its action in Ukraine. Current Russian policy aims to cut off these links.

The escalation in tensions between Russia and the EU is first and foremost the result of completely different threat perceptions. Brussels perceives its neighborhood policy as a guarantor of economic and political reforms, stabilization, and growing social welfare in the countries on its eastern borders. The Russian elite, on the other hand, perceives that policy as a serious infringement into its traditional sphere of influence. From Moscow's perspective, this undermines Russia's birthright in its immediate neighborhood, paving the way for "color revolutions" and regime change. Indeed, as the Kremlin sees it, the main aim of Western policy in post-Soviet countries is not so much regime change in, say, Kiev but in Moscow

itself. By this logic, the mass demonstrations that took place in Moscow and Saint Petersburg in 2011–12, during which thousands of Russians protested the outcome of parliamentary elections and questioned the presidential elections, are seen as proof of the pernicious influence of Western policy.

The main problem with this way of looking at the world is that it sees society as something to be manipulated rather than a relevant political actor in its own right. It underestimates social change and the power of social movements to influence national and international politics. For this reason, Russian leaders have underestimated domestic political dynamics on several occasions – not only in Russia 2011–12 but also particularly in Ukraine in 2004 and again in 2013–14. High-ranking Russian officials argue that the currents that brought about Ukraine's 2004 Orange Revolution and the subsequent Euromaidan movement were the result of outside meddling – chiefly by the US, which they see as wanting to weaken Russia just as it did in Cold-War times. It is extremely difficult to break free of this paradigm because it is so deeply grounded in the Russian ruling elite's historical stereotypes and paranoia.

Russia's leaders have the impression that their country is at war with the West. This February, Russian Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev spoke at the Munich Security Conference not about an *upcoming* Cold War but rather confirmed that we are *already* in a new Cold War. Seen from Russia, this hardly seemed spectacular; for the Kremlin considers it a fact.

Indeed, Russian media and decision makers were more surprised by the Western "overreaction" to Medvedev's speech than to its actual content, which to them seemed simply to offer a sober analysis of reality. This again confirms the degree to which so many European politicians fail to understand the mindset and logic of Russian politics. Only gradually are they realizing that a fundamental conflict with Russia is underway – not only over

Ukraine but also about norms, principles, and the security order in Europe.

One example of this is the Russian propaganda currently being rolled out via various media platforms. From a Russian point of view, Moscow's robust "information war" is simply a reaction to similar media tactics being conducted by the West. By this logic, the activities of RT and Sputnik – to say nothing of the legions of "trolls" posting negative comments on the Internet portals of Western media and NGOs – question the existing media discourse in Europe and aim to tell "the story behind the story." This undermines the credibility of Western media and aims to confuse the public on what are facts and what is fiction. The basic instruments of this "war" are nothing new, even if they have taken on cutting-edge, digital dimensions. What is surprising is how little the EU is prepared to engage in this kind of conflict, for it hardly arrived from out of the blue.

Russian decision makers have studied for years how the West, and particularly the US, makes use of media and non-governmental organizations to "manipulate" decision making and promote their preferred policies. The discussion in US media that took place in the lead-up to the 2002 invasion of Iraq continues to furnish an object lesson. In their minds, they are simply responding in kind: undermining the credibility of Western democracies, its media and institutions. It is worth noting, however, that Russian action with regard to media, supporting groups and using fake institutions is much more about understanding and using the weaknesses of the West than pursuing a long-term strategy or offering an alternative concept to Western media.

Media war aside, European politicians tend to overestimate the strategic depth of Russian policy on a variety of fronts. In fact, it is much more reactive and tactical than it is strategic. Moscow's main advantage is that it is capable of rapid, non-democratic decision making and, as such, can be extraordinarily bold. It is accountable to no one, and this of course is also its weakness. Today's Russia lacks a system of checks and balances and has no functioning correctives. Its current leadership is driving Russia toward deep political and economic crisis as well as international isolation. This makes the country even more vulnerable and will, in turn, increase the reactivity of Russian policy. The weaker Russia becomes, the

more aggressively its leadership will react. The fundamental loss of trust between Russia and the EU has created a stalemate situation from which neither side knows how to emerge. Even if Russian leaders try to improve the relationship at least rhetorically, as Medvedev did in Munich, European politicians no longer believe the words of Russian officials.

This is a very dangerous situation, for the clear rules and red lines of the Cold War are absent from today's global context. Our December 2015 Trialogue Workshop – the fourth in four years – focused on security. It brought together a group of Russian, Polish, and German experts to discuss their respective national security discourses and the security situation in Europe more generally. As a series, the Trialogues aim to forge better understanding of "the other side" through presentations and opportunities for discussion. We believe these are crucial first steps in trying to overcome misperceptions and stereotypes. Under the current circumstances, frank dialogue of this sort is more important than ever.

We asked the participants to describe their country's "main security threat." From the German side, the answer was the refugee crisis. Polish experts pointed to the threat posed by Russia, while the Russian speakers described their worries about color revolutions and regime change in the post-Soviet sphere.

Certainly, it is necessary to acknowledge how very different the perceptions among EU member states can be, to say nothing of the difference between Russia and the EU as a whole. Only with a real rather than a wishful understanding of our counterparts can we work on a new *modus vivendi* and overcome the dangerous situation in which Europe currently finds itself.

The Germany-Poland-Russia Trialogue is conducted by the DGAP, IMEMO, PISM, SDPZ, and the Warsaw office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation. It will continue to pursue this topic in further workshops and will regularly present publications derived from those events. The three short papers included here provide short analyses of how the security situation is currently perceived in each of the three countries.

Stefan Meister, DGAP

What Security Model for Europe? The Discourse in Germany

Jana Puglierin

How has the security situation changed for Germany in the context of the Ukraine conflict? What are the country's main security challenges? What future models are being discussed?

Before the protests on Kiev's Maidan square – prompted by President Viktor Yanukovich's refusal to sign the European Union Association Agreement at the November 2013 EU summit in Vilnius – made their way into German headlines, Ukraine was a country not well known by most Germans and not very popular in the German media. Yanukovich's "No" and the start of the protests came as a total surprise to German politicians, media, and society. Once the Maidan movement had begun, however, events in Ukraine received comparatively high levels of attention in the German public sphere. This increased following Russia's occupation of Crimea. Early on, a divisive and polarized debate emerged about Germany's stance vis-à-vis Russia.

Prominent figures like former German chancellors Helmut Schmidt and Gerhard Schröder, known to their critics as "Putin-Versteher" (Putin sympathizers), publicly expressed a certain "understanding" for Russia's actions. Schmidt went so far as to say that he could not see any violation of international law, while Schröder compared the Russian invasion of Crimea with NATO's actions in Kosovo in 1999. Both attributed responsibility for the crisis merely to the West and to the new government in Ukraine and advocated that Germany play a neutral, mediating role. Some parts of the German public and business world shared these views, but members of the current German government did not. Nor did most politicians (with the exception of Die Linke), foreign policy experts, or the majority of the media, which openly and decisively condemned Russia's actions from the very beginning. In their view, Russia's annexation of Crimea and its spoiling behavior in eastern Ukraine put at stake the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity – and, as such, the very basis of Europe's peace order. The heated discussion that arose between these two camps – Putin sympathizers and Putin critics – deeply divided the German public.

The Perspective of the German Government, Especially the View from the Chancellery

The German government played an active role in responding to the Ukraine crisis from the very beginning.

For the first time since 1945, Germany took the main leadership position in a major conflict in Europe. Chancellor Angela Merkel, who had never been known for a particularly interest in foreign policy, took charge of the crisis as chief Western diplomat. She immediately declared Russia's armed takeover of Crimea to be unacceptable to today's Europe, condemning its "annexation" as a fundamental violation of international law and the European security order. Soon she became the driving force behind the EU's sanctions against Russia. Her engagement came as a surprise for most observers – inside and outside Germany.

Some observers expected that the SPD's Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Gerhard Schröder's political protégé, would become a kind of counterpart to the CDU's Angela Merkel. But when it came to the Ukraine conflict, Steinmeier condemned Russia's actions as resolutely as Merkel did. This was particularly difficult for him due to the SPD's longstanding tradition of favoring Ostpolitik – a policy of putting Russia first and robust engagement with the country. It also contradicted Steinmeier's initial attempt when he took office in 2013 to renew a "modernization partnership" with Russia.

Both Merkel and Steinmeier argued that Germany was not (and is still not) willing to accept that European borders could be changed by force. Nor is it ready to accept the notion of a Russian "sphere of influence." Any security model for Europe is therefore unacceptable if it is based on ideas like "spheres of influence" or the Concert of Europe (referring to the division of post-Napoleonic Europe among the continent's great powers). That is as true of a "new Yalta Agreement" as a "new Congress of Vienna," or any other security model following similar lines. As Merkel put it, "Outdated thinking in terms of spheres of influence which tramples international law underfoot must not be allowed to prevail. I firmly believe that it will not prevail, even though the road may be long, even though it may be arduous and bring with it many setbacks."¹

For Germany, the fundamental liberal ideas of sovereignty, equality, and the freedom of states to choose their alliances are non negotiable. It is therefore equally difficult for Germany to sympathize with the idea of tolerating the existing (semi-) autocratic regimes in Russia and parts of its neighborhood as a new guiding principle for the OSCE. From a German official perspective, this would represent a serious step backward from the provisions of the Paris Charter of 1990. It also contradicts Germany's understanding of free civil societies and their right to express their will publicly.

The Main Security Challenges for Germany

When it comes to Russia and the Ukrainian crisis, the major security challenges for Germany are first of all “an attack on NATO territory,” especially on the Baltic states, and, second, the prospect of “hybrid warfare” or “non-linear warfare” waged by Russia. Germany’s answer to this is to strengthen NATO (using all means within the NATO-Russia Final Act of 1997 without going any further) and to weaken Russia through economic sanctions. While doing this, however, the government is also consistently seeking dialogue with Russia and avoiding everything that could escalate the situation. To this end, Germany has rejected putting Western “boots on the ground” in Ukraine and has also strictly opposed the delivery of weapons. Steinmeier never tires of pointing out that “there is no military solution to the conflict in Ukraine.”² He and his colleagues also state frequently that peace and stability without Russia is not possible in Europe. This position is shared by a majority of CDU, SPD, and Green party members. Only some conservative defense experts and parts of the German military have stressed that NATO’s Rapid Action Plan was not appropriate to really deter Russia and should be followed by harsher means.

Outlook

As things have grown calmer on the war front, Germany’s general attention to the Ukraine crisis has decreased. The refugee crisis in the EU, the fight against ISIS, and the complex developments in Syria have dominated the news

overwhelmingly, putting the German government under much pressure. Priorities have shifted. The Ukrainian crisis is no longer seen as the biggest threat to European security. Naturally, however, the chancellery has a strong interest in finally fixing the situation in Ukraine in order to dedicate more time and effort to getting the refugee crisis under control. The government seeks the implementation of the Minsk agreement, which helped to calm things down to a certain extent so far, and is pushing for elections in the Donbas region – probably before Ukraine is ready.

Meanwhile, the fear of a possible escalation leading to a bigger European war has practically vanished. Russia seems to be an “indispensable” nation to end the Syrian war, and Chancellor Merkel and Foreign Minister Steinmeier have recently invited President Putin to return to the negotiating table. At the same time both still underline that only the full implementation of the Minsk Agreement will lead to the full lifting of sanctions.

This position is controversial. Sigmar Gabriel and others within the SPD ultimately started to question the current sanctions. Gabriel is supported by the German business community, particularly by its Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations (Ost-Ausschuss). Gabriel even went to Moscow for a friendly visit, which the Kremlin later described as amicable and constructive. Merkel’s success – as impressive as it was – in winning acceptance for financial sanctions from the German business lobby is also fragile, since most key executives are eager to normalize relations with Russia.

Poland's Security Debate 2014–2015: Anxiety and Resolve

Marek Świerczyński

Poland's threat perception changed dramatically in the aftermath of Russia's aggression against Ukraine in early 2014. A country that has cherished the idea of a unified, free, and peaceful Europe since it joined the EU in 2004 is now confronted with the vision of war close to its borders. For the first time in 15 years – that is, since Poland's accession to NATO in 1999 – anxiety prevails over feelings of strong transatlantic security.

What was actually shocking was not that the Russians did what they did but that they did it so quickly and seamlessly in terms of power projection capabilities – as if by a push of a button by the Kremlin. Poland has long revered the principles of territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence. Watching Russia capture territory by force and fuel separatism in Ukraine, a friendly and strategically important country to Poland, marked a tectonic shift in its security landscape.

Although Poland's security pundits were among the few in Europe to realize the dangerous implications of the Russian-Georgian war back in 2008, their voices were largely neglected not only in Europe but at home as well.³ In 2014, the toughest military challenge to face Poland since World War II arrived just as its armed forces were in the middle of a deep restructuring process. As such they were unprepared for the kind of threat posed by Russia's hybrid tactics in Ukraine – not to mention for all-out defense.

Ghosts of the past have now reemerged, from deeply rooted doubts about the willingness of Western allies to defend NATO's eastern flank to suspicions that the recent reductions of the country's military may have been instigated on purpose by traitors and, finally, to the fear that, once again, Russia and Germany are plotting behind Poland's back to carve it up. Obviously, this last concern is not a result of any military cooperation between Berlin and Moscow but is rather inspired by the punishing energy policy the two countries are jointly pursuing, the most recent manifestation of which was the Nord Stream 2 agreement.

But to say that Poland is frozen with fear of war is to go too far. If anything, anxieties have given a new impetus for the country to push for more security both within NATO and the EU. Poland has raised the level of military cooperation with European and transatlantic partners to unprecedented levels and has taken the lead in NATO's shift in focus toward its core defense roles. On a bilateral

level, within Europe Poland successfully approached Germany, France, the UK, and the Nordic countries for stronger military liaisons. Poland and Sweden signed a bilateral defense agreement under the previous Polish government. Estonia was the first country that Andrzej Duda visited upon his election as Poland's new president, and Poland has stated that Finland's system of territorial defense will serve as a model for its own new volunteer and reserve force.⁴

Previously unheard of numbers of NATO troops have been training on Polish ranges – on land, sea, and in the air; rotational presence of aviation, armored, paratroop, and special operation forces has been established in multiple locations across the country. US warplanes have used abandoned airstrips in Polish forests, demonstrating their ability in case of an emergency to forward deploy to remote places with limited logistical footprints. In March 2015, a US Patriot battery staged exercises just outside Warsaw with a scenario of massive Russian air and missile assault. The scenario involved hundreds of air sorties and Iskander TBM (missile) strikes.

Despite these active reassurance measures, however, Poland's debate has been focused on an issue that is somewhat more difficult to secure: permanent NATO presence. It was in Weimar on April 1, 2014 that Radosław Sikorski, Poland's foreign minister at the time, said he would be happy if two NATO armored brigades would be permanently stationed in Poland.⁵ It was a characteristically bold statement for Sikorski. At that time nobody seemed to notice the date – April Fool's Day – and indeed, two weeks later with the annexation of Crimea, nobody was in the mood for joking. The goal of “two heavy brigades” has since become the official policy of the government in Warsaw, despite the fact that for the analysts in Germany and in Poland, that perspective started more as a dream vision than a genuine aim.

NATO is still working on the new posture arrangement, but domestically, Poland has introduced some radical amendments. These included physically strengthening military bases in the east of the country, shifts in military procurements, increasing the number of active professional troops, and intensifying training for both reservists and volunteers. The new Polish government led by the Law and Justice party (PiS) is likely to emphasize territorial defense, NATO presence, and regional alliances – while halting some of the key armament deals.

Russia – not long ago regarded by Poland as a strategic partner – was officially listed as a potential threat in the new military strategy published in 2014.⁶ The language of the document and the follow-up exercises and decisions

make clear that if Poland sees any danger in the near future, that danger comes from Russia.

With the NATO summit coming to Warsaw in July 2016 and with the Ukraine crisis still high on the European agenda (as the Minsk Agreement's expiration date approaches), Warsaw will remain focused on helping Kiev. President Duda wants to address the issue with an international conference and multilateral agreement – broader than Minsk – that is based on Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty prior to Russian aggression. He will also push for establishing permanent NATO bases on the Alliance's eastern flank. This is also one of the key security policy demands outlined by the new PiS government, although realities in Europe and the US will nonetheless make it difficult to fully implement. PiS is happy to accept rotational persistent presence of allied troops, especially those of the US Army – since it relies much more heavily on the US than it does on NATO as a whole.

That approach has not been questioned in domestic political debate. Poles still tend to see America as the pillar of European security, especially versus Russia. In their eyes, just as PiS puts it, NATO is good, but the US is better in terms of defense. Some experts and politicians,

mainly left-wing and liberal, try to underline the role of EU security policy and the importance of international bodies like OSCE, but those seem to have little appeal in the face of Abrams battle tanks firing live ammunition on Polish training ranges. And with the domination of right-wing and conservative policies due to last year's double election victories, the nuanced approach to understanding security is in retreat.

As Western Europe offers only a lukewarm reaction to the idea of strengthening the defense structures on Russia's border, Warsaw will look to Washington for help. In fact, the US was the first to respond to last year's crisis by sending troops and planes on contingency, and they promised to stay for as long as needed. That presence may not be permanent, but it will persist for the time being. We will see more, with the planned US Army's equipment prepositioning base as well as the US Navy's anti-ballistic base in north of Poland. This does not come for free, however; the bulk of Poland's vast military spending plan may be placed with US defense contractors. But, in the opinion of Poland's current decision makers, that will only help their strategic plans.

New Helsinki Needed? A View from Russia

Alexander Nikitin

The Nature of the Crisis in Relations between Russia and the West

The current state of relations between Russia and the West does not amount to a full-fledged crisis or a “New Cold War.” Elements of crisis in Russian-Western relations coincide and merge with elements of interaction and even elements of cooperation in dealing with common threats. However, the present strains in interaction could at any moment turn into a real crisis, including a military confrontation – for example as the result of a naval incident in the Black Sea, the misinterpretation of military exercises, or a relocation of military infrastructure either belonging to NATO or to Russia/the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

In the political and diplomatic fields, Russia and the West will probably find new common ground relatively soon for normalizing their interactions in general (and certain key channels of interaction have remained open all along). In the military field, however, the new arms race could continue for decades, undermining disarmament negotiations and treaties as well as creating opportunities for closer contact – and contests – between military infrastructures, both of which are prone to risk.

There are a number of important differences between the current situation and the Cold-War conditions that prevailed from the late 1940s to the late 1980s?

1. The ideological component is absent or unclear. In the struggle between communism and capitalism – two mutually exclusive social and ideological projects imposing themselves on the political map – ideology constituted the key element. No opposing ideological models dominate the current confrontation, which appears more a matter of large geopolitical entities balancing their interests.
2. The scope of the confrontation is limited. While the Cold War confrontation was total, intruding into all spheres of relations, today’s standoff is more selective; apart from the political disagreements, everyday social, cultural, personal interactions between Russia and the West continue, albeit in a somewhat distorted way.
3. We are not teetering on the brink of a “hot war,” especially when it comes to the nuclear threat. The parties in today’s confrontation are much more cautious. While the prevailing disagreements are certainly taken seriously, the conflict is not considered an existential

one; no one today is questioning the very survival of either Russia or the West.

The history of international relations offers plenty of comparable confrontations. Although the situation is dangerous, it should not be dramatized. Political dialogue must be continued.

The Immediate Reasons and Deeper Roots of the Confrontation

While the West considers Russia’s actions toward Crimea and its support of separatism in eastern Ukrainian to be the cause of confrontation, the Russian view is that the West promoted illegal regime change in Ukraine and that Moscow subsequently only followed pragmatic methods – of the same sort used by the West in the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya.

This line of argument is not as important, however, as the need to reflect on the deeper roots of the disagreements between Russia and the West:

- The parties view world events differently and see their interests and opportunities being affected in different ways.
- The parties have different views both about the place they occupy – or wish to occupy – in the world order and the places occupied by their counterparts.
- The parties have different views on the availability and appropriateness of particular methods and tools for achieving their goals in international affairs.

At a time of global shifts, reduced roles of traditional Western powers, and emergence of new players from the former periphery, the configuration of players on the global stage is changing. Each country is driven by the desire to ensure its place in this new configuration.

Many in Russia believe that the new post-Cold War system failed to take Russian interests into account, whereas many in the West considered Russian expectations to be excessive. In Russia the perception gained traction that the Western powers do not consider it an equal partner, whereas the West disregarded Moscow’s growing irritation. Of particular concern to Moscow were the “color revolutions” taking place in several neighboring states – states in which the West supported the opposition.

As an extended period of high oil and gas prices allowed Russia to build up new strength, it no longer felt “down on the ground” as it did in the 1990s but felt able to state its interests more assertively.

Could Actions in Syria Unite Russia and the West in a New Anti-ISIS Coalition?

Moscow's present motives to engaging in Syria are based not only on self interest –stemming the spread of terrorism – but also on the desire to establish a broad international coalition involving Russia, the West, and moderate Muslim states. At present there are three parallel coalitions: Russia and the forces of Bashar al-Assad; the West and the moderate Syrian opposition; and a coalition of moderate Muslim states against ISIS. Should these coalitions be unable to coordinate their efforts, however, a further deterioration of relations between Russia and the West could occur.

The Need to Strengthen the Role of International Law

Russia and the West accuse each other of violating basic principles of international law. In contrast to some Western interpretations, Russia is in fact interested in setting up clear rules of conduct based on international law and the UN Charter.

The two possible scenarios are 1) a further erosion of basic principles of international law, leading to increasing unilateralism or 2) concerted attempts to strengthen international law, with either the West or Russia – or both – taking a leading role

Russia's permanent seat on the UN Security Council and its extensive legal tradition place it in a good position to call for a return to the basic principles of international law. This is to involve various areas of international law, including, among others, the prompt interpretation of UN mandates for operations in conflict zones legal limitations on external interventions in civil wars; and calling to account parties – including states – that fund or supply direct or indirect support to terrorists.

A Window of Opportunity? Prospective Ways for Russia and the West to Interact

Even under deteriorating conditions, there are continuing formats for fostering political dialogue between Russia and the West. These include: The Normandy Format (involving Russia, Ukraine, Germany, and France) and the OSCE as the basis for the Minsk agreements; talks held on the margins of the OSCE, the UN, and the G20; summits in different formats involving heads of states; and direct military consultations in the context of coordinating action in Syria.

Obviously there are many remaining real and potential fields for cooperation between Russia and the West. These include the joint fight against terrorism and ISIS; a resolution of the wider crisis in the Middle East.; implementing the agreements with Iran; nuclear non-proliferation; coordinating a multilateral response to North Korea's nuclear ambitions; implementing the START-III agreements to reduce strategic nuclear weapons and their deployment; and an exchange of experiences on migration issues.

Under the current circumstances, concrete political and diplomatic steps that could be taken by Russia and the West include:

- Intensifying negotiations between Russia, Ukraine, and the West in a new Normandy Format, including a detailed study of the existing Minsk Agreements and the development of a “new Minsk Agreement” to settle the Ukrainian crisis
- Intensifying and expanding cooperation in the security sphere, for example developing joint actions against ISIS, conducting consultations, and coordinating efforts to address security challenges in such as Syria, Afghanistan, and North Korea, among others
- Fostering dialogue between Russia and Western countries about the problems of migrants and refugees, and exchanging experience on related topics, for example with a summit on migration problems
- Reviving the NATO-Russia Council
- Initiating new peacekeeping missions, including the joint participation of NATO contingents and CSTO peacekeeping forces in UN missions.
- Developing new proposals in the field of disarmament and arms control, including conventional arms control.
- Initiating a joint summit on energy issues.
- Strengthening the Helsinki process and developing a new comprehensive European security treaty and new security guarantees
- Developing new initiatives for nuclear safety, promoting the prevention of extending weapons into outer space, and jointly developing a code of conduct for outer space.
- Establishing a new agreement for interaction between Russia and the EU in general and specifically working out new road maps for a free trade zone with Ukraine
- Fostering three-way discussions involving the EU, Russia, and Ukraine on economic and trade issues
- Promoting special bilateral discussions between Russia and Germany, Russia, and France, and Russia and other key EU powers

- Creating a Coordination Council of regional organizations and establishing a dialogue between the Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) and the EU as well as between the CSTO and NATO
- Facilitating visas for EU citizens in Russia and Russian citizens in the EU
- Developing permanent communication “hot lines” between Russia and NATO, especially for data exchange on large-scale military exercises, redeployment of troops, and so forth
- Developing and strengthening the Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security-building Measures

- Initiating a dialogue on the non-deployment of non-strategic nuclear weapons outside national territories
- Developing agreements on the prevention of provocative and risky military activities in the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea

In conclusion, the current period of manifest disagreement requires serious efforts from both Russia and the West in order to avoid further confrontation and to promote the normalization of international interaction.

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Endnotes

- 1 Speech by Chancellor Angela Merkel at the Lowy Institute for International Policy in Sydney, Australia, November 17, 2014 <http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/EN/Reden/2014/2014-11-17-merkel-lowy-institute-sydney_en.html> (accessed March 1, 2016).
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- 3 The Polish Institute for International Affairs (PISM) published two such reports: Robert Śmigielski and Bartosz Cichocki, "Russian policy towards Poland and EU after the Georgia war: Consequences for International Security" [in Polish], PISM Bulletin, August 11, 2008 <http://www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=668> and Łukasz Adamski, "Russian Policies Toward Poland and the European Union after the War in Georgia" [in Polish], PISM Bulletin, September 18, 2008 <https://www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=675> (both accessed February 18, 2016).
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- 5 Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "[Poland, Germany and France want Closer cooperation with Eastern Europe," press release, April 1, 2014 <http://www.msz.gov.pl/en/news/they_wrote_about_us/poland__germany_and_france_want_closer_co_operation_with_eastern_europe__dispatch_of_the_polish_press_agency__pap_01_04_2014_.jsessionid=49EEE54E99213EDB252DA53AD58E70F0.cmsap1p> (accessed February 18, 2016).
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